# ELIZABETH GASKELL

John McVeagh

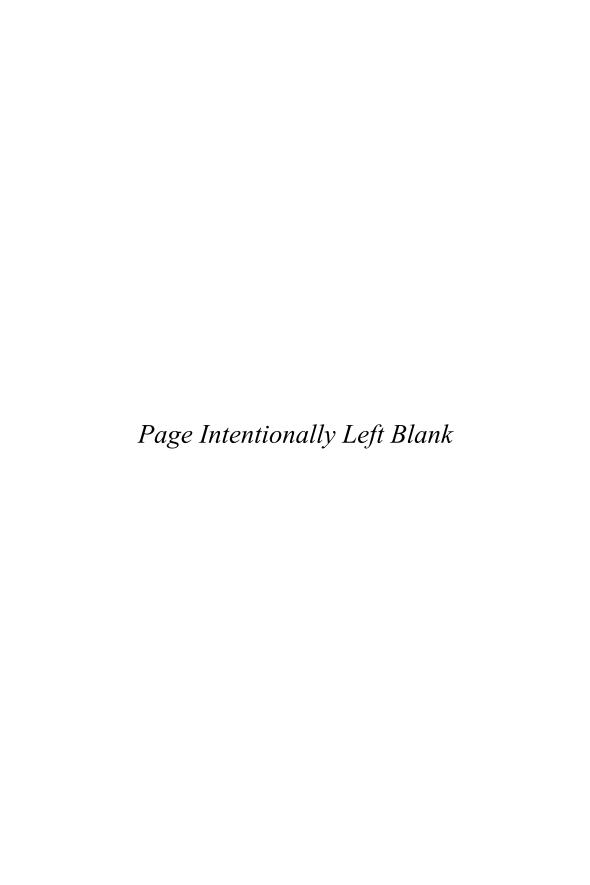
# ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL



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Volume 26

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### JOHN MCVEAGH



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## Elizabeth Gaskell

by John McVeagh



LONDON

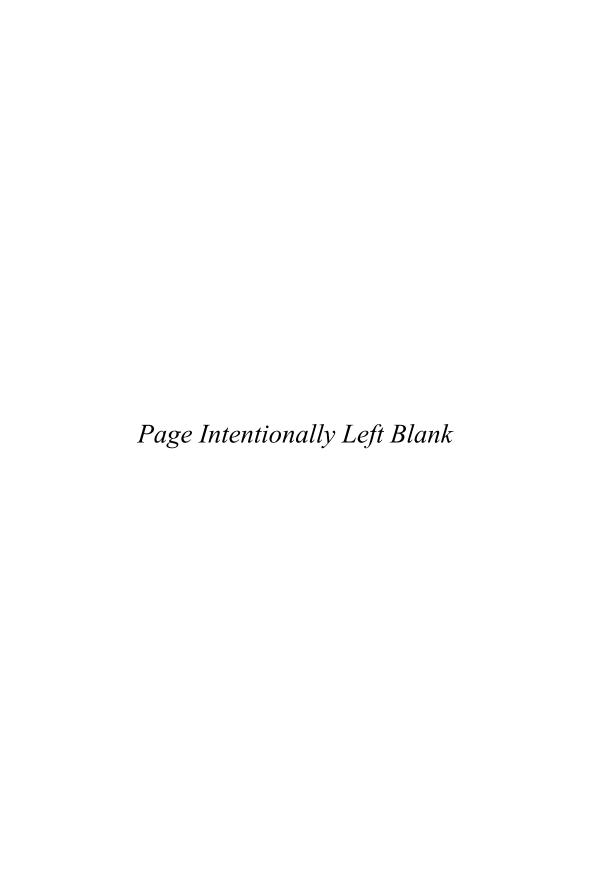
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## Table of important dates

1810	Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson born in Chelsea.
1811	Removal to Knutsford after mother's death.
1822-3	School at Avonbank, Stratford-on-Avon.
1827	Leaves Avonbank.
1832	Marries William Gaskell. Removal to Manchester.
1845	Death of son, William. Begins writing.
1848	Mary Barton published.
1853	Cranford and Ruth published. Furore over latter
	prostrates author.
1855	North and South published.
1857	The Life of Charlotte Brontë published. Visit to
	Italy.
1863	Sylvia's Lovers and Cousin Phillis published.
1865	Death. Wives and Daughters left unfinished.



## **C**ontents

ΤA	BLE OF IMPORTANT DATES	vi
P R	ELIMINARY REMARKS	I
PL	AN OF ANALYSIS	9
N O	VELS OF SOCIAL CRITICISM	10
I	Mary Barton, ch. 6	10
2	Mary Barton, ch. 10	ΙΙ
3	North and South, ch. 17	13
4	North and South, ch. 20	16
5	North and South, ch. 40	18
6	Mary Barton, ch. 37	19
7	Ruth, ch. 22	21
8	Ruth, ch. 32	23
'T H	HE LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË'	25
9	The Life of Charlotte Brontë, ch. 2	25
10	The Life of Charlotte Brontë, ch. 17	27
ΙI	The Life of Charlotte Brontë, ch. 28	29
12	The Life of Charlotte Brontë, ch. 12	31
13	The Life of Charlotte Brontë, ch. 19	32
ΝO	VELS OF COUNTRY LIFE	34
14	Ruth, ch. 12	34
15	Ruth, ch. 13	35
16	Cranford, ch. 1	37
17	My Lady Ludlow, ch. 14	40
18	Cousin Phillis, part III	43
19	Wives and Daughters, ch. 6	45
20	Sylvia's Lovers, ch. 28	47
		vii

### CONTENTS

THE CHALLENGE OF LIFE		51
21	Mary Barton, ch. 3	52
22	Sylvia's Lovers, ch. 30	54
23	Cranford, ch. 14	56
24	Wives and Daughters, ch. 10	57
25	The Life of Charlotte Brontë, ch. 16	59
ТН	E HUMAN RESPONSE	61
26	Mary Barton, ch. 34	61
27	,	62
28	North and South, ch. 46	65
29	Wives and Daughters, ch. 44	67
30	Sylvia's Lovers, ch. 45	69
N A	RRATIVE MANNER	72
31	The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell, pp. 540-2	73
32	Mary Barton, ch. 1	76
33	Sylvia's Lovers, ch. 9	77
34	Mary Barton, ch. 6	79
35	Mary Barton, ch. 6	80
36	North and South, ch. 17	82
37	Wives and Daughters, ch. 45	85
38	Ruth, ch. 19	89
LIN	MITATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT	91
39	Sylvia's Lovers, ch. 12	93
	Wives and Daughters, ch. 23	96
<b>4</b> I	Mary Barton, ch. 20	100
SE	LECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	107

viii

### **Preliminary remarks**

Mrs. Gaskell holds a secure and merited place among the novelists of the nineteenth century. Her novels, written in the early years of the Victorian period (from 1848 to 1865), offer us a record of certain aspects of the daily life of her time which, in its observed detail and clear vision, is recognizably and uniquely hers, distinguishable from the novels of her contemporaries by its firmness, honesty and lack of distortion. Her material is the ordinary life of the time, her characters normal and typical nineteenth-century individuals—the factory hand, the doctor's daughter, the farmer, the manufacturer; she is interested in them as individuals, and the main content of each novel is simply the description and exploration of the texture and feel, pressures and demands of their day-to-day existence. She is therefore a writer worthy of study in that her novels reflect the moods and problems of her society, or that part of society which she knew well, with the minimum of distortion or exaggeration; as if it was her aim to portray in fiction precisely what it felt like to live in the England of the early and middle nineteenth century. She avoids the extraordinary, the sensational and the false as a general rule, dealing rather with real problems, ordinary people, likely situations; her presentation is matter-of-fact, her